

CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The life experience of someone living with a mental illness or co-occurring diagnosis is best understood by someone who has also experienced a similar journey. Professional certification lends credibility to the individual professional and ensures quality services are received by the individual in care.

WHO CAN BE A CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST?

Peer Support Specialists:

- Are at least eighteen (18) years of age and able to work legally in the United States
- Have a high school diploma or GED at minimum
- Have lived experience with a mental illness and recovery
- Have completed the approved Idaho Peer Specialist training
- Have completed the requirement for hours worked depending upon education
- Have completed the required hours of supervision
- Have submitted an application for certification

WHY SHOULD I GET CERTIFIED?

To provide Peer Support Specialist services in the State of Idaho, you must be certified in the State of Idaho. Certification allows for Peer Support Specialist services to be billed and payment received for rendering those services.

CAN I GET A JOB WITHOUT CERTIFICATION? The State of Idaho requires certification of Peer Support Specialists for Peer Support services to be funded by state and federal funds. Most agencies in Idaho that provide Peer Support Specialist services and receive state or federal funds or reimbursements from third party payers do require certification. Check with your potential employer. Your employer should know and/or have the requirements listed in the job description.

If you previously held a certification in Idaho by Jannus, Inc. (formerly Mountain States group) or were certified in another state before July 1, 2015, you may continue to practice as a Peer Support Specialist under your current certification until December 31, 2015. After December 31, 2015, the state of Idaho Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) will no longer offers reciprocity to individuals certified by Jannus, Inc. before July 1, 2015. You will only be able to apply for reciprocity if you were certified in another state.

If you are applying for reciprocity and have obtained a certificate in another state, you must have completed a certification exam for that certificate in the last two years from the date you are applying for reciprocity in the State of Idaho. Please contact Jannus, Inc. for information about upcoming trainings.

HOW DO I APPLY TO BE A CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST?

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) will accept applications by mail at:

450 W. State St.

Boise, ID 83702

Attn.: Peer Support Specialist Oversight Committee

Based upon the type of application, you may be granted:

- **Six-month certification:** This applies to an applicant that has completed the basic requirements for an initial application which includes documentation of attending the Idaho approved training, has submitted the letter of notification received from Jannus, Inc., has submitted a completed Code of Ethics Affidavit, but may be lacking in documentation of the supervised hours on the Work/Experience Summary document. If a six-month certificate is granted, it is a one-time only certificate, or
- **Full certification:** This applies to an applicant who has completed the Idaho approved training, provided supporting documentation and has completed the requirements regarding work experience with supervision. If the application is for reciprocity (previously certified), the applicant has also provided documentation regarding Educational Experience, and any continuing education/training obtained since their original Peer Support Specialist training.

WHERE DO I GET AN APPLICATION AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

Visit

- <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/MentalHealth/PeerSpecialistsFamilySupportPartners/tabid/2935/Default.aspx>, or
- PeerSpecCert@dhw.idaho.gov

Or contact:

Peer Support Specialist Oversight Committee (208)-639-5720

HOW LONG WILL THE PROCESS TAKE? The DBH Peer Certification Oversight Committee will make all efforts to process your application within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of your complete application.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I AM CERTIFIED?

- If your application for certification is granted, you will receive an official certificate in the mail with an accompanying congratulatory letter.
- If your application for certification is denied, the letter you receive will include your rights to grieve the decision.
- Located on the DBH Peer Support Specialist website is a list of those with an active certification. To access the list, you will be directed to a page regarding a disclosure and once submitted, you may be granted access to the list.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE ALL THE REQUIREMENTS WHEN I SUBMIT AN APPLICATION?

If you have completed your required training, but do not have a way to obtain your required supervision hours, you may apply for certification and be granted a one-time certification that is valid for six months. In those six months, you will be able to work to obtain your required work experience and supervision hours. If you do not submit the remaining requirements for certification, your six-month certification will lapse and you will need to reapply. The six-month certificate is only available for those who are applying for an initial application and have just completed the Idaho approved training. As of January 1, 2016, the six-month certificate is not available for those applying for reciprocity.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN BY SUPERVISION HOURS? The State of Idaho requires that once a Peer Specialist has completed the Idaho approved training, then they must obtain supervised work/volunteer experience for certification. Depending upon your level of educational experience you may be required to complete 100 or 200 hours of supervised work/volunteer experience. For certification, a Peer Support Specialist is required to have twenty (20) supervision hours to ensure quality and consistency of services delivered. Typically this would mean 1 hour of supervision for 40 hours of work. You can document your work/volunteer experience and supervision hours on the Work/Volunteer Experience Summary Form. This form is best if submitted after your required hours are completed.

WHAT IF I CAN NOT PASS A BACKGROUND CHECK? The Division of Behavioral Health does offer a background check waiver. This waiver is available for those who are applying for a work/volunteer position **only** at a state regional office or those applying for employment at a substance use disorders agency. The background waiver is not recognized by the behavioral health managed care contractor in the State of Idaho and therefore not available for those working in a community mental health agency.

WHAT IF I GET DENIED? If you receive a denial letter from the DBH regarding your Certification application, you have a right to submit a formal grievance. Please seek out the grievance process details at the website

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/MentalHealth/PeerSpecialistsFamilySupportPartners/tabid/2935/Default.aspx>

- You may submit a grievance in writing or via email to:

Candace Falsetti, QA Program Manager
450 W. State St. 3rd floor
Boise, ID 83702
Email: FalsettiC@dhw.idaho.gov

RECIPROCITY (Previously Certified):

The Division of Behavioral Health will accept an application for reciprocity if you were certified in another state. Beginning January 1, 2016, DBH will no longer accept applications for reciprocity for those certified in the state of Idaho before July 1, 2015.

- If you are seeking certification through reciprocity because you were previously certified in another state or practiced in another state, please submit documentation of your previous certification training. Provide documentation regarding the certifying body or organization in order for this information to be verified.
- An appropriate applicant will have completed and passed a training and certification exam within the last two years from the date of application.
- Complete the Statement of Personal Experience which is included in the application.
- Provide documentation of any Continuing Education/training hours you have received since your certification up to your application through the DBH.
- Complete the Education Experience Summary.
- Complete the Code of Ethics affidavit.

Please submit a complete application with the above requirements. Applications that are missing any parts of the requirements for reciprocity will not be accepted.

I ATTENDED A PREVIOUS PEER SPECIALIST TRAINING AND RECEIVED A CERTIFICATE. IS MY CERTIFICATION FROM THAT TRAINING STILL VALID? If you attended a previous training for Peer Support Specialist in the State of Idaho and received a certificate, your certificate from that training and certification exam will be valid until December 31, 2015. Beginning January 1, 2016, you will need to complete the Idaho approved training for Peer Support Specialists and apply for certification following the completion of the Idaho approved training.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY CONTINUING EDUCATION OR TRAINING HOURS WILL QUALIFY?

Continuing education or training following certification is a component to maintain your certification. You may participate or attend webinars, classroom-based education or training, or workplace training. Possible training topics are, but not limited to: Recovery, Trauma Informed Approaches in Mental Health, Interpersonal Skills and Communication, Relationship Dynamics, Empowerment, Diversity, Cultural Sensitivity, Local & State Behavioral Health system topics, Ethics, Use of Recovery Story, Responding to Crisis, and or Wellness. At least one hour of the Continuing Education/training hours is required to be in Ethics, annually. You can view the Behavioral Health standard for Peer Support Specialist Certification on their website. There you can see a more detailed list in Standard 1.9.

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/MentalHealth/PeerSpecialistsFamilySupportPartners/tabid/2935/Default.aspx>

- Submit with your application a copy of your certificate of attendance or certificate of completion. Ensure that the certificate documents the topic/title of the training, who provided the training, and how many hours you participated.

HOW LONG IS MY CERTIFICATION GOOD FOR?

Your full certification is valid for one year from the date of issuance. If you were granted a six-month certificate, your six-month certificate and letter will indicate when your six-month certificate will lapse. If you have a six-month certificate, it is your responsibility to submit the remaining requirements to be granted for the remaining six-months for a total of a year. **It is your responsibility to keep track of your recertification date; no reminders will be sent.** When it is time to recertify, you will need to go to:

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Medical/MentalHealth/PeerSpecialistsFamilySupportPartners/tabid/2935/Default.aspx> and complete your re-certification application. This includes documenting your continuing education/training hours earned during the last certification period. **The re-certification application must be postmarked on or before the expiration date as shown on your certificate.**

If your application is not complete and received by the date shown on your certificate, any Peer Support services provided may not be reimbursable due to your Certification being invalid.

WHAT IF MY NAME, ADDRESS OR SUPERVISOR CHANGES? If you have had a change in your demographic information or change in employment that affects your supervised work/volunteer hours, please call the Peer Support Specialist Voice Mail (208) 639-5720 or email PeerSpecCert@dhw.idaho.gov with the changes to your

application information. **It is your responsibility to update the Division of Behavioral Health regarding any of these changes.**